

A guide to enhance the integration of gender mainstreaming for entrepreneurial support structures



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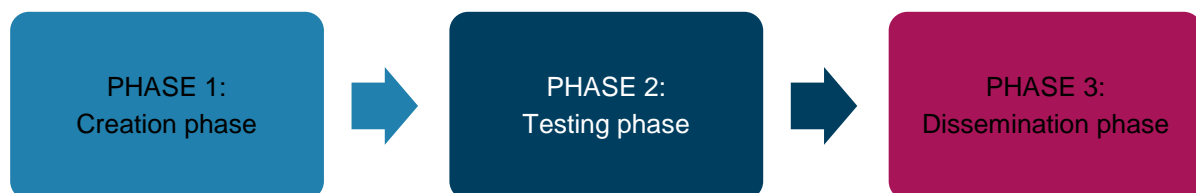
WHAT IS THE FOWOSE METHODOLOGY?

FoWoSE stands for Fostering Women's Social Entrepreneurship through the gender mainstreaming of support structures. It is a project led by PULSE together with Women on Top (Greece), Empow'Her (France), Reach for Change (Bulgaria) and Synthesis (Cyprus).

Its objective is to **boost the integration of gender** at **operational** and at **program level** for entrepreneurial ecosystem support structures. To do so, the project will develop methodological and training contents, like this one, which fit women's needs and that will allow supporting organisations to run tailored programs and initiatives for the needs of women social entrepreneurs.

The project will run from November 2021 and will last until December 2023. It will be organised in three different phases:

1. The **"creation phase"** aims to create different tools. First a methodology for organisations to integrate gender equality issues at the structural level -i.e. the manual that you are now reading. Then training tools to increase the skills of staff of the structures and enable them to better train and support women social entrepreneurs. Last, a manual of good practices for gender integration at the structural and program level, designed to help ecosystem structures to be more inclusive towards women social entrepreneurs.
2. The **"testing phase"** which will allow each operational partner to test the methodology and the various trainings tools intended for women social entrepreneurs, in order to give feedback and improve the material before deploying it more widely;
3. The **"dissemination phase"** to spread the training tools with an open-source approach and to raise awareness among the ecosystem support structures.



Through this methodological tool we aim to empower each and every entrepreneurial support structure to begin their journey towards gender mainstreaming their policies, practices and operations and support a more and more equitable entrepreneurial ecosystem in the process.

We are looking forward to receiving your impressions, comments and adaptations of this material in order to make it even more effective and inclusive for all.

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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To develop this methodology, we conducted an extensive literature review and based our recommendations on three main frameworks described below.

The WEPs

Launched in 2010 by UN Women and the UN Global Compact, the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) have been endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly, the G20 and the G7. They provide a platform to mobilize business action for implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG5 on gender equality and women's empowerment. The seven Principles offer guidance to business on how to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community. Informed by international labour and human-rights standards, the WEPs are grounded in the recognition that businesses have a stake in, and a responsibility for, gender equality and women's empowerment.

By joining the WEPs community, a CEO signals commitment to this agenda at the highest levels of the company and to working collaboratively in multi-stakeholder networks to foster business practices that empower women.

The Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs)

- **Principle 1:** Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality
- **Principle 2:** Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and non-discrimination
- **Principle 3:** Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers
- **Principle 4:** Promote education, training and professional development for women
- **Principle 5:** Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women
- **Principle 6:** Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy
- **Principle 7:** Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality

Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming has been embraced internationally as a strategy towards achieving gender equality. It involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programs, with a view to promoting equality between women and men, and combating discrimination.

A political commitment to gender equality and the accompanying legal framework are the basic conditions for the development of a successful gender mainstreaming strategy. In addition to concrete objectives and targets in the strategy, gender mainstreaming requires a clear action plan. Such a plan should consider the context, satisfy the necessary conditions, cover all the relevant dimensions, foresee the use of concrete methods and tools, set out the responsibilities and make sure that the necessary competences exist to achieve the anticipated results within a planned time frame.

Gender mainstreaming requires both integrating a gender perspective to the content of the different policies, and addressing the issue of representation of women and men in the given policy area. Both dimensions – gender representation and gender responsive content - need to be taken into consideration in all phases of the policy-making process.

The ILO mandate and guidelines

The International Labour Organisation's mandate on gender equality is to promote equality between all women and men in the world of work. This mandate is grounded in International Labour Conventions of particular relevance to gender equality - especially the four key equality Conventions. These are the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156) and the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183). The mandate is also informed by Resolutions of the International Labour Conference - the highest-level policy-making organ of the ILO - in 1975, 1985, 1991 and the June 2004 Resolution on Gender Equality, Pay Equity and Maternity Protection.

The ILO has a two-pronged approach toward promoting gender equality. First, all policies, programs and activities aim to systematically and formally address the specific and often different concerns of both women and men, including women's practical and strategic gender needs. Second, targeted interventions - based on analysis that considers these concerns and needs - aim to enable women and men to participate in, and benefit equally from, development efforts.

This policy was made operational through an ILO Action Plan on Gender Mainstreaming for Gender Equality, endorsed by the ILO Senior Management Team in November 1999. The five main elements of the action plan to operationalize gender mainstreaming are: strengthen institutional arrangements; introduce accountability and monitoring mechanisms; allocate adequate resources for gender mainstreaming; improve and increase staff's competence on gender; and improve the balance between women and men among staff at all levels.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for anyone who wants to promote gender equality and bring about change within their organisation and doesn't know where to begin.

It is for anyone, no matter their management level or field of expertise, who wants to better understand, in practical terms, what this change could actually look like, what it will take and who needs to be involved.

This guide is for anyone (and their team) who wants to be a changemaker and to start working on the integration of gender at the operational and at the program level of their organisations, and needs a comprehensive, tested and practical set of tools and resources to carry with them. More specifically, the target audiences of this guide are

- Board members
- HR professionals
- Communication professionals
- L&D professionals
- (Social) Entrepreneurs
- NPO executives

Change is a **collective effort** and this guide is for anyone who believes that, to better support their beneficiaries, serve their clients, design their products and services and work effectively with all stakeholders related to their organisation, their need to integrate gender mainstreaming at the structural level. This way they can persuade others to go on this journey with them.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

You can start reading this guide from start to finish, keeping notes and drawing doodles in the process. Or you can jump at any one chapter and dig deep into what the information and the suggestions it contains could mean for your organisation.

Each key area explored in this methodology includes:

- a. information and ideas on the “business case” for pursuing it
- b. ideas on what progress and success look like in this regard
- c. some of the challenges that come up in this area
- d. the metrics we need to track in order to evaluate needs and progress
- e. the steps we need to take in order to bring about positive change
- f. who are all the different people we should aim to get involved

The key areas for planning and intervention that we have included in this guide are based on the 7 WEPs but have also been informed by the need’s assessment implemented by the FoWoSE team of partners and by Women On Top’s 10-year experience from working on the gender impact assessment of businesses and organisations.

WE Principle 7 (Measurement and Reporting) has been incorporated horizontally to all other areas so as to ensure the proper evaluation of any planning and action taken in the context of the gender mainstreaming of services and organisations. WE Principle 1 (High Level Leadership) has been expanded to include the equal representation of women in the highest levels of decision making. A separate key area was also included (Work-life balance) in order to account for the increased need of our stakeholders to design and implement gender-responsive work-life balance structures and policies, both for their staff and often for their beneficiaries as well.

The guide has been adapted to the realities of small and medium CSOs and social enterprises working to advance female entrepreneurship and is designed so as to easily integrate any useful feedback and/or suggestions that will make it even more helpful to the ecosystem as a whole.

More information, data, best practices and tools can be found in the Suggested Resources section of this guide.

Key area 1 | Leadership

Equitable and inclusive corporate leadership (both in numbers and in practice) is a key and integral part of making gender equality and women's empowerment a top strategic priority for any organisation, big or small. It publicly signals the CEO's and the executive team's goals and targets for promoting gender equality in entrepreneurship and creates a high-level framework that defines how this commitment will become part of the corporate sustainability strategy, day-to-day operations and organizational culture of the company.

Why this is important

Commitment to gender equality from the top leadership of an organisation sets the agenda on gender equality and can help kickstart and/or sustain initiatives that have a considerable impact on gender equality results. Publicly communicating this commitment, while sharing what the company is doing to promote women's empowerment, can influence employees, customers, other organisations and also suppliers and contribute to an increased awareness around gender issues in the general public.

At the same time, the equal participation and involvement of women and men on a corporate board contributes to diversity of opinion in decision-making, by eliminating homogeneous ways of thinking (groupthink) and promoting diverse perspectives and a more rigorous debating of proposed ideas. The impact of having a balanced board and an inclusive leadership team can also be felt in how proactive, aware and responsible an organisation is on issues of social justice, gender equality and sustainable development. Last but not least, leadership teams that reflect the diversity of today's society are better placed to understand the needs of their beneficiaries -in this case of entrepreneurs with diverse backgrounds and needs.

What progress looks like

- The makeup of the organisation's board reflects the makeup of the organisation's stakeholders
- Top company leaders publicly and systematically affirm high-level support and direct top-level policies for gender equality and human rights
- Both internal and external stakeholders are engaged in the development of company policies, programs and implementation plans that advance equality
- There are established company-wide goals and targets for gender equality and progress is included as a factor in managers' performance reviews
- All policies are gender-sensitive and corporate culture advances equality and inclusion

What challenges you may have observed

On the demand-side of challenges, you may observe that the priorities of part or the whole of the leadership team lie more with upholding the status quo the organisation's governance than with changing it. You may also observe a lack of prioritization of gender diversity in board composition, and/or gender stereotypes and biases that decrease the number of women who are considered or hired for top leadership positions.

You may also have to deal with supply-side obstacles that affect the pipeline of board-ready women. These include a shortage of qualified women in male-dominated fields, a lack of opportunities for female mentorship, sponsorship and skill-building and/or a lack of work/life balance provisions that enable parents and other caregivers to progress in their careers and take on leadership roles.

What metrics to track

- Number/percentage of women on the organisation's board
- Number/percentage of women who are considered for each leadership vacancy
- Number of public high-level commitments and statements of support by the CEO towards gender equality

What steps to take

It is a fact that neither diversity of board members, nor a gender-sensitive organisation-wide agenda, will happen on their own. They both require strong leadership and concrete action to overcome the barriers to women's access to leadership roles and board seats.

Signing of the UN Women's Empowerment Principles by the CEO of the organisation can be used as a public commitment to gender equality, as an internal signal of positive change and as a framework for action and success.

Publishing data about how many women sit on their boards, executive and leadership teams can ensure that companies remain accountable to their employees, stakeholders and consumer bases. This information should be coupled with sharing the company's values in relation to gender equality and D&I values through its digital platform. Leverage media opportunities, owned media assets, events and internal activities to build a continuous communication loop around transparency and commitment. Also, incorporate gender markers into existing reporting obligations.

Identifying and/or designating a leadership and/or board-level individual who champions the implementation of the gender equality policies and plans can help with keeping the gender-related goals and plans in the agenda of the company's leadership through times of crises and/or changes in governance. Alternatively, the company can create a specialized board-level committee to develop gender-diversity policies, monitor their implementation, engage recruitment search firms for board members' selection etc.

Setting quantitative goals related to women's empowerment and leadership is an important first step to tackle these challenges. After establishing a baseline on the metrics mentioned above, the organisation's leadership can set ambitious but realistic SMART goals that reflect the organisation's commitment to gradual positive change. Leadership commitment and targets should be followed by putting in place systems to manage for, track and report on results in achieving gender equality. Companies can create a stand-alone document to report on the implementation of their gender-related plans or they can integrate gender dimensions and indicators into existing reporting systems. In this process, various stakeholders can be involved to define and track the gender equality targets (see **Who needs to be involved** section below).

How to set and track a SMART goal

The SMART in SMART goals stands for **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound**.

Defining these parameters as they relate to your goal helps ensure that your objectives can be attained within a concrete time frame. It also eliminates generalities, sets a clear timeline, and makes it easier to track progress and identify missed milestones.

An example of a SMART-goal statement might look like this: Our goal is to increase the percentage of women on our board to [quantifiable objective] by [timeframe or deadline]. [Key players or teams] will accomplish this goal by [what steps you'll take to achieve the goal]. Accomplishing this goal will [result or benefit].

When setting SMART goals related to women's representation, do not forget to track decision making and the implementation of the accompanying plan for learning and future reference.

Ask and answer:

1. What was the baseline situation?
2. What was the goal or final outcome that was formulated?
3. What were the activities that were implemented?
4. What stakeholders were involved?
5. How did we track and measure progress?
6. What were the main challenges?
7. What success factors, unintended consequences or advice can we identify?

Including gender-related selection criteria for members of the board can prove to be a powerful lever for change at the board level. This may be met with some resistance from the existing governance structure, for that reason it is important for gender-related criteria to be incorporated in a wider board diversity policy outlining company strategies for ensuring that hiring practices are inclusive and that barriers along the corporate talent pipeline are eliminated.

To ensure effectiveness, this policy can be coupled with clear monitoring and reporting structures and progress can be reviewed regularly. Both the policy and the set of criteria for the recruitment and selection process need to be carefully structured in a way that does not leave room for discomfort around whether the selected individuals will be “the best for the job”.

It is also important for all the **selection criteria to be systematically reviewed and re-assessed** so as to remain relevant to the roles of prospective leaders and not perpetuate indirect discrimination in the form of requirements that exclude most women from evaluation. For example, criteria that require all prospective board members to have very extensive previous board or CEO experience (a trait that much fewer women possess, not because of limited professional capabilities but mainly because of the systemic barriers that have prevented their progression) can be replaced by more realistic time-related KPIs and supplemented by a fast-track induction program for new board recruits. Or extensive experience can remain as a must-have for specific board positions and get eliminated as a criterion for others. Rather than solely recruiting and hiring individuals with skills that mirror those of the people they are replacing, organisations can focus on competencies and transferable skills and experiences.

When recruiting for board-level or other leadership positions, **using gender-neutral job descriptions, diverse interview panels, and blind résumés** can help with removing deep-seated biases from the selection process. Traditional recruitment channels also need to be revisited and a more mixed approach used, focusing on reaching a more diverse and representative mix of candidates.

Provide the organisation’s leadership with **training** on the importance of women’s participation in management, managing gender stereotypes and biases and creating an inclusive corporate culture. Set clear goals around the objectives and frequency of these training sessions, the topics that will be covered, partners who can support you in designing and delivering them and people who will be asked to attend. Incorporating those sessions into wider “board readiness” and other capacity building programs can help alleviate any resistance around focusing the board’s attention to “soft” “women’s issues”.

Instituting age and term limits for board members can help ensure that there will be regular opportunities for new and diverse recruitments in board, leadership and executive positions.

Better early than sorry

While we are focusing on equal representation on the leadership level, it is important to remember that increasing women's presence in the senior ranks of management and on boards requires focusing on greater diversity in all talent pipelines.

This also keeps companies competitive and provides qualified women with more opportunities to advance their careers.

Even with age and term limits, board turnover can still be slow. The representation of women on boards can be improved by **adding positions**, and ensuring that they are filled by qualified women with diverse backgrounds, identities and abilities.

Succession planning is an important part of ensuring that the leadership team and/or board of the organisation are gender balanced. Succession planning involves:

- a. Monitoring future vacancies
- b. Proactively determining women who would be a good fit for the role
- c. Publicly disclosing these practices for transparency
- d. Making sure that women within the organisation obtain adequate operational and general management experience
- e. Encouraging and preparing qualified women to take on more responsible and visible assignments so as to build on their potential and develop future team leaders
- f. Offering training, mentoring and/or coaching to suitable women if current company practices are not enabling them to progress through the management hierarchy
- g. Consulting with professional women's organizations, universities and other organizations with databases of qualified women to identify potential candidates from outside the organisation in a consistent and timely manner

Establishing **training, mentoring and/or coaching programs** to support women who want to progress in leadership positions can help with general leadership skills building but also with keeping employees up to date on new work developments, such as developments in the fast-paced tech industry, especially when they have recently been on caretaking leave.

Improving women's access to "hot" projects can help them build the skills and the connections that will allow them to pursue leadership roles.

It is important that even after women are appointed to senior management positions the organisation takes **all the necessary steps to ensure that they are successful**, not only for the good of the company and the individual, but also as an example for others to follow.

Coaching, constructive feedback, mentoring, sponsorship and networking opportunities (either within the company, with other companies or in the wider community) are ways to ensure women thrive in management positions at every level.

If leadership positions within your organisation require **mobility and/or frequent travel it is important to:**

- a. Consider more flexible ways of working
- b. Not exclude women with caretaking responsibilities without even considering them for those roles and
- c. Explore providing job placement support or employment options to the employee's partner to ease the impact of relocating the family
- d. Provide work/life balance support for short-term travel such as childcare subsidies, milk-shipping services, an extended travel budget to include family etc.

Conducting company-wide research can help identify and eliminate barriers to female leadership by collecting gender statistics and sex-disaggregated data with a focus on intersectionality. This data can improve the monitoring of women's progression along the corporate pipeline, their participation in training opportunities, their access

to key projects and the impact of existing women's empowerment initiatives within the organisation. Conducting exit interviews with board members can also help capture their experience on the board to inform future efforts.

Who needs to be involved

Apart from the board members themselves, this is a collective effort that requires active participation by internal actors such as the HR and communications departments.

However, implementing any effective policy for promoting gender equality at all levels also requires consultation, particularly with women employees. Ensuring that women's voices are heard and valued can create an open line of communication that is itself free of gender bias. Organisations should create opportunities for women to communicate, set goals and discuss challenges. In addition, giving visibility to role models helps to shape and reinforce a culture of gender inclusivity.

Key area 2 | Equal Opportunities & Non-Discrimination

Inclusion, equality and non-discrimination revolve around the equal treatment of and opportunities for women and men in the workplace. Even though legislation and company policies often include these principles, organisational culture and structure, habits, implicit biases and stereotypes can result in indirect discrimination or unequal treatment of women and men. Removing all forms of discrimination in corporate policies, strategies, culture and practices, with regards to hiring, opportunities, wages and benefits, is a critical step forward in any organisation's gender equality journey.

Is a diversity and inclusion policy enough?

Some companies are now formulating policies to leverage diversity and inclusion. These aim to cultivate an inclusive corporate culture in order to maximize employee engagement and productivity and, therefore, business competitiveness. A diversity and inclusion policy generally consists in a statement of principles and values that are authoritative enough to hold leaders and employees accountable for its implementation. The policy may refer to national or EU laws on equality, non-discrimination and sexual harassment, and may be brief or lengthy enough to provide definitions and provide examples. However, it is important that such a policy includes a specific section on gender equality or gender inclusion as well as specific language on gender equality.

Why this is important

Treating all women and men fairly at work aligns with international human rights principles and also translates to better talent acquisition, higher employee retention, engagement and satisfaction, increased productivity and better decision making.

What progress looks like

- Women and men are paid in a **fair** and **equitable** way
- Women and men are equitably **represented** in different types of **contracts**
- Women and men are equitably **represented** in different **hierarchical levels** of the organisation's structure
- Women and men are equitably **represented** in different **professional fields and job categories**
- All employees feel that they are treated fairly, that they are included and that they can thrive within a work environment **free of discrimination**

What challenges you may have observed

Discrimination and/or the unequal treatment of women and men can happen at all levels of the company and at the pre-contractual stage, during the employment period, and in relation to dismissal. It can be direct and overt or subtler and more indirect.

You may have identified instances of gender-based professional segregation in the organisation, meaning that there are female- and male-dominated departments and/or hierarchical levels that seem to have always been that way. You may be finding it hard to attract female or male candidates for specific roles within the organisation.

You may also suspect or observe that there are pay disparities within men and women -these may not necessarily be reflected in their monthly wages, but may come up in their bonuses and/or other non-salary benefits.

Levelling the field of pay

Remember that pay equity doesn't just involve equal pay for work of equal worth. It also means ensuring that there are no great disparities between the average pay level of men and women within the organisation. On the other hand, although determining an overall gender pay gap figure for a company is a good start, an overall figure may obscure more persistent pay inequalities at different levels within the organisation. Hence, best practice also includes examining pay disparities across different employee categories, or pay bands.

Last but not least, you may be facing resistance around the collection and analysis of gender disaggregated data and/or around the re-evaluation of long-standing policies and practices (an "if it isn't broken, why fix it?" and/or a "we've always done things this way" state of mind).

What metrics to track

- Numbers and percentages of women compared to men represented with a specific type of contract or in a particular job category
- Number of women in management
- Gender wage gap
- Rates of recruitment of women and men
- Promotion rates of women and men
- Retention rates of women and men
- Employees' views towards corporate policies on equal opportunity, inclusion, non-discrimination and retention

What steps to take

Gender-based discrimination might not always happen with intention but can be the result of lack of information, personal biases, a non-inclusive workplace culture, lack of supporting structures for promoting gender equality, or merely a lack of commitment to eliminate discrimination at work.

Collecting, tracking and analysing sex-disaggregated data on a regular basis can help pinpoint gender-based discrimination in both its direct and indirect forms. Moreover, **analysing the organisation's policies and operations** from a gender perspective is an important starting point for identifying gaps, risks and opportunities. Once the analysis of the baseline situation is in place, a company can create an action plan with targets and activities to achieve the change that they want to see.

Run an employee survey examining their views a) around corporate policies on equal opportunity, inclusion and non-discrimination and b) on the barriers that are possibly preventing women from developing professionally.

Putting in place **an accessible mechanism** where employees can file complaints on gender-based discrimination is part of the process.

Establishing an equal employment opportunities (EEO) policy helps guarantee equal opportunities in all terms and conditions of employment, including recruitment, hiring, promotions, transfers, reassignments, training, career development, benefits, and separation. Many such policies now include provisions on workplace harassment, sexual harassment and bullying. Implementing an equal employment opportunities policy can also provide companies with some protection against discrimination lawsuits.

Making targeted efforts to eliminate gender bias in the recruitment and promotion process can mean that women are empowered to apply for positions and can also be selected in higher numbers. In order to prevent gender bias from impacting recruitment decisions, organisations can:

- a. Train HR staff on gender mainstreaming hiring, promotion and retention strategies.
- b. Pay attention to language. Job descriptions or ads often use language that echoes traditional gender stereotypes. As a result, they may appeal more to men or more to women for no other reason than the mental picture they help prospective employees to draw. That means that even qualified candidates may pick up on this use of language and conclude that only one gender should apply. To attain more gender balance, review job descriptions to pinpoint and exclude language that unnecessarily plays into gender stereotypes.
- c. Require that both men and women get shortlisted for every open position.

- d. Run recruitment campaigns specifically targeting women. These can have a considerable impact on the numbers of women applying and/or being hired. The same holds true for male-targeted campaigns, for functions where men seem to be underrepresented, e.g. HR, communications or roles with a strong social or care component.

Gender-based positive action: Controversial, yet necessary.

Workplace gender-based positive action is a necessary tool to address gender inequality through proactive measures. These measures are normally used to:

1. Improve employment opportunities for women or men (i.e. job ads specifically targeted to female talent)
2. Enhance the professional development of women or men (i.e. mentoring programs for female employees)
3. Ensure the right to a gender equal representation and participation at the workplace (i.e. board quotas)

Although, at times, positive actions, policies and measures are subject to criticism for causing reverse discrimination, they are an important tool in addressing a long history of gender inequality at the workplace. And, when positive action is carefully designed, with specific, results-oriented procedures and SMART goals in place, it can help eliminate the effects of gender discrimination and help create more equal professional environments for all.

- e. Make sure that interview questions remain the same for both male and female applicants. Review the wording of interview questions to ensure they do not give subtle advantages to one gender or the other.
- f. Aim for gender balanced selection panels (40/60 of either sex) in order to help counter gender bias.
- g. Ensure that all recruits, including women, are given challenging, responsible and visible assignments from the beginning of their appointment. These will allow them to demonstrate their potential early on in their career.
- h. Establish an objective performance review process, using relevant and transparent criteria that prevent the application of double standards relating to specific traits and achievements of men and women.

The Master Suppression Techniques as a form of discrimination

The Master Suppression Techniques were developed by the social psychologist Berit Ås. Trying to explain how gendered power dynamics are reproduced, Ås identified 5 “suppression techniques”. Although these techniques could be used by anyone, Ås defined their use as a gendered phenomenon. Whether the use is intentional or unintentional, the techniques seem to be having the effect of undermining and oppressing women.

Awareness of these techniques can be used to identify oppression in the workplace. Familiarising yourself with the concepts, therefore, can help to prevent and stop the use of them, whenever they occur.

Suppression techniques

1. Making the person seem invisible by ignoring them or their ideas.
2. Ridiculing the person by constantly degrading and making fun of them, or their social group or their ideas.
3. Withholding information and keeping someone out of decision-making processes, or keeping useful information away from them.
4. Criticising the person, regardless of what they actually do: finding reasons to punish or complain about them.
5. Blaming and shaming: when someone starts to notice they are being oppressed, blaming them for it even though it is your fault.

Taking steps to establish the organisation’s wage gap and to begin bridging it is a critical step towards eliminating discrimination. In order to succeed, you need to:

- a. Determine work of equal value, using gender-responsive and objective criteria, and review regularly. This process considers a variety of factors across different jobs, such as skills, the effort involved, responsibilities and working conditions.
- b. Establish and implement a comprehensive equal pay policy
- c. Establish a regular frequency of periodic equal pay reviews/audits, including basic pay, overtime and bonuses
- d. Find or test a number of possible explanations for the source, nature and likely causes of any differences between women’s and men’s pay within the organisation
- e. If you have never done a pay review in the past, treat the findings of the first one as your baseline and devise a plan of action to redress the gender wage gap
- f. Establish a pay transparency and secrecy policy that both empowers individuals to have an informed say on their wages but also works for each organisation’s culture. Begin by setting and sharing publicly the criteria used to determine pay and reward structures and making salary brackets and benefits known by level

- g. Stop requesting pay history. Basing current wages on previous ones perpetuates the existing pay gap. A woman's or man's past salaries should not determine the level of the present or prospective salary
- h. Support collective bargaining
- i. Depending on the findings of your pay audits/reviews, consider allocating a special temporary budget to eliminate historic disparities in wages between women and men. An efficient way to close the gap is for companies to identify which employees are contributing the most to the gap, then allocate raises as efficiently as possible to close the gap

Why be transparent?

Transparency is central to eliminating pay inequality. It gives employees confidence that their pay is fair and non-discriminatory, which has been shown to provide motivation for greater productivity and team collaboration. Transparency is particularly important in closing the gender pay gap, as it facilitates discussion, both internally and externally, of what does and does not work and promotes knowledge-sharing. Pay transparency helps both employers and employees obtain the information necessary to assess gender discrimination and rectify pay gaps, as well as negotiate fair remuneration, individually or through collective bargaining. This will also reduce the risk of unequal pay claims being made against companies. Conversely, not disclosing pay can reinforce gender discrimination in business practice and create doubt and mistrust among colleagues or between employees and employers.

Encouraging fathers to take time off for care responsibilities helps ensure that the pay and promotion gap that often follows a caretaking leave of absence does not always fall onto the shoulders of women (motherhood penalty).

Make sure that **remote or hybrid ways of working** are not used as an excuse to pay employees who choose to work flexibly less than those who are always present in the office. What's more, be careful not to indirectly penalise employees working remotely with less facetime with their supervisors or less opportunities for professional development and/or promotion.

Set a target for the sufficient participation of women – 30% or greater – in decision-making and governance at all levels and across all business areas.

Who needs to be involved

To tackle discrimination and establish effective equal opportunity policies and practices, you need an ongoing collaboration between management, employees and their representatives (if relevant), as well as independent experts. All stakeholders have an important part to play in helping shape policies and practices according to the specific needs and profile of the company.

What's more, consulting with both managers and employees on the application of the resulting policies promotes engagement and ownership.

Key area 3 | Work/life balance

Gender equality and women's economic empowerment are intimately intertwined with achieving work–family balance, ensuring a more balanced sharing of family responsibilities and investing in the care economy.

Why this is important

Investing in family-friendly and work/life balance policies ensures that employees with care responsibilities are supported and valued. Implementing family-friendly policies has strong business value too, as it increases employee retention and engagement, reduces absenteeism, and lowers overall recruitment costs.

This is especially important as it is expected that, by 2025, 75% of the world's workforce will be made up of millennials. Millennials bring with them a refreshed understanding of modern families and seem to value work/life balance more than previous generations. This means that organisations that do not respond to the needs of this new workforce risk losing out on young and diverse talent and may struggle with employee loyalty and retention.

Family-friendly policies and flexible work arrangements enable working parents, especially mothers, to advance in their careers, thus improving gender equality KPIs within organisations. Studies show that when men take paternity leave, women are more likely to remain in full-time employment, the wage gap is smaller, and more women occupy leadership and board positions. What's more, during leave, parents develop transferable skills (conflict management, multi-tasking, time management, and financial responsibility etc.) that are valuable, but not always recognized, in the workplace setting. Organisations that retain parents in the workforce benefit from these newly acquired or improved skills.

What progress looks like

- All employees have access to quality work/life balance provisions and feel comfortable making use of these benefits
- Corporate culture does not encourage overwork and burnout but openly values family-friendly policies and a balanced approach to work
- Female and male employees are expected to contribute equally in their caretaking responsibilities and women face no discrimination related to their roles as careers when it comes to their getting hired, paid equitably or promoted within the organisation.

What challenges you may have observed

You may have observed that mothers tend to experience disadvantages in hiring, perceived abilities, labour market interruptions and their overall daily job experience compared to non-mothers and fathers alike. These disadvantages culminate in a wage penalty known as the “Motherhood Pay Gap” -the unequal pay between mothers and non-mothers.

Plus, it is not infrequent to see pregnant women being discriminated against in hiring, retaining and promoting. They are also more likely to be denied the right to return to work once their maternity leave is finished.

As a consequence of the above, you may also observe that the need for more flexibility that is due to their care responsibilities, prompts many women to take up paid work that is part-time or in the informal economy, where wages are usually lower, perpetuating the gender pay gap.

Another challenge is that male employees who take advantage of paternity leave policies tend to be viewed as less committed employees. This stigmatisation can deter other fathers from taking advantage of existing policies.

You may also have observed that gender stereotypes will be reinforced, rather than challenged, when workplace cultures offer flexible work arrangements but continue to favour working on site and working long hours, while women disproportionately utilize flexible working arrangements.

What metrics to track

- Maternity, paternity and family leave length and entitlements
- Numbers and percentages of women and men asking for and taking advantage of these benefits
- Numbers and percentages of women and men taking advantage of flexible working provisions
- Employees’ views and satisfaction on policies and practices supporting people with caring responsibilities
- Number of childcare and nursing facilities and numbers/percentages of male and female employees using these facilities

What steps to take

Making sure to implement a needs assessment before just announcing a one-size fits all work/life balance strategy is critical in the effectiveness of the proposed policies. Different groups within the organisation may have different needs - for example parents of newborns in comparison to parents of teenagers.

Establishing and making sure to meticulously implement policies pertaining to paid maternity, paternity and parental leave as well as flexible work arrangements (such as adjusting working hours or working from home) helps ensure that women with care responsibilities can easily re-integrate into the workforce and advance along the corporate pipeline. When designing a leave policy, employers are advised to consider a wide range of leave options to ensure full employee coverage with, at least, the minimum of guaranteed paid maternity and parental protection set out by national legislation.

As parental leave decisions are often based on economic security, it is often the case that the lowest income-earning parent will take the longest leave to minimize financial loss for their family. By **ensuring that a parent's employment and financial security is guaranteed** and upholding the right for parents to return to the same job with the same pay earned prior to taking parental leave employers recognise that adequate income replacement is one of the strongest predictors of uptake of either maternity/paternity leave or parental leave, especially by fathers. That also means preventing discrimination against pregnant women and workers with family responsibilities in hiring, job assignment, training, conditions of work and firing.

Broadening leave eligibility to part-time, short-term, contract, seasonal, temporary workers can help prevent inequalities between employees with and without access to paid leave. Making sure that caretaking leaves and flexible working provisions are equitably offered to all workers and family types prevents discrimination and builds a more open, fair and inclusive organisational culture.

Offering parents, a robust pre-leave and staggered return can boost employees' engagement and productivity. Pre-leave programs allow employees to reduce their workload gradually, begin their leave a few weeks before the child's arrival, choose to telework, or to work part-time. This allows them to adapt to spending more time away from work but also prepares colleagues for their departure.

On the other end of the leave period, re-entry programs may include a staggered return with remote working for a couple of days per week or part-time working for the first couple of weeks as well as flexible time arrangements. Re-entry programs can also offer skills-building and training to ensure that employees are up to date on new work developments and/or provide support services such as a buddy system (partnering a returning parent with a parent who has successfully returned to work after parental leave) to assist parents in re-adjusting to the workforce.

Establishing “leave liaisons”, clear boundaries and guidelines as well as a carefully designed communication plan (what will be discussed, frequency and mode of communication) with employees on leave, can help parents stay connected to developments happening in their line of work while they are away. However, safeguards should be put in place to avoid pressuring the employee to work during maternity, paternity or other types of caretaking leave.

Actively promoting the uptake of paternity and parental leave by fathers, especially those in very high, really visible hierarchical positions, can encourage the equal distribution of care work between men and women, both at work and at home. This can be achieved through:

- a. Awareness raising campaigns
- b. Circulation of informational material
- c. One-on-one conversations with parents-to-be
- d. Earmarking leave entitlements (making them individual, non-transferable or compulsory)
- e. Fostering a corporate culture that values family responsibilities and the equal uptake of leave between parents
- f. Encouraging men who have taken leave (especially those on high-ranking positions) to act as ambassadors

Offering affordable childcare services (in-house childcare facilities and/or childcare support schemes) responsive to the needs of both working parents and children, rather than extended leave periods with little or no compensation can help mothers return to full-time employment, avoid large gaps in their work histories and keep progressing through the organisational hierarchy. Also, employer-supported childcare can allow fathers to share the role of caretaker equally if their business offers this service. The quality of childcare services is linked to the qualifications and working conditions of childcare workers but there are multiple workplace solutions to support working parents that can be adapted to the characteristics and size of each company at zero or low cost (subsidized care, back-up care etc).

Using inclusive language and/or removing gender from caregiving roles, contribute to the responsibilities of caregiving becoming more equitable among parents.

Facilitating ongoing health and safety risk assessments to ensure that workplace health and safety standards match employees’ needs is integral to supporting parents in the workplace. This can include addressing concerns of whether specific tasks (such as heavy lifting or exposure to chemicals) may pose a risk to a parent or child. Critically evaluating concerns through open dialogue with immediate actions to address workplace health and safety risks is a critical element in providing a safe work environment for parents. Temporary work modifications to accommodate pregnant employees can also include flexible work arrangements to account for doctor appointments and periodic resting, and permitting environmental/individual modifications to allow uniform alterations, relaxed food and drink policies, and a ban

of no-sitting policies. If risks cannot be eliminated and such provisions cannot be made, employers should offer paid leave in accordance with national laws, regulations or practice.

Providing paid breaks or reducing daily working hours for breastfeeding mothers is essential. However, companies can offer more comprehensive support through increased family-friendly policy development or modification. Supporting breastfeeding mothers includes providing a clean and private environment for mothers to breastfeed, flexible work arrangements and hours to better accommodate breastfeeding mothers. A basic and appropriate breastfeeding space should have a door that can be locked from the inside, a flat surface other than the floor on which to place supplies, proper lighting and ventilation, cleaning wipes and paper towels, and an electrical socket. It should also be accessible to individuals with disabilities. Many companies go beyond these basic provisions to include a sink with soap and running water, a breastmilk-designated refrigerator, a microwave to sterilise supplies and/or a comfortable chair.

Avoiding taxing employees with excessively long hours and unpredictable overtime and/or scheduling work on traditional days of rest is essential for providing individuals with caring responsibilities a functionable and sustainable working life.

Making sure that **employees using flexible work arrangements will not be penalised** for doing so and considering other benefits/conveniences for employees whose positions cannot comply with work from home solutions is an important element of any work/life balance policy.

Taking care to limit the hours of communication with teams, offer commute support, design and implement self-care initiatives for all employees (sports-related support, gym facilities, extra personal leave days, support hotline) and encourage leaders to act as work/life balance role models is a critical step towards ensuring that all individuals (careers and non-careers alike) feel included in the overall HR strategy of the organisation.

Assessing the work-life balance issues of all employees should be done systematically and periodically to ensure that all challenges are tackled in an effective and timely manner.

Who needs to be involved

HR teams should be assisted by health and safety professionals as well as by real estate management teams to ensure the design of comprehensive and effective work/life balance policies and provisions.

Team leaders play a critical role in the implementation of those policies, because they act both as role models and as gatekeepers in all issues pertaining to the work/life balance needs of their team members.

Internal communication teams should also assist this effort by making sure that all departments and employees remain at all times informed about the benefits they are entitled to as well as the work/life balance policies of their organisation.

Key area 4 | Health, safety and freedom from violence & harassment

The Health, Safety and Freedom from Violence key area highlights employees' rights to safety and freedom from violence in the workplace as well as the fact that sometimes women and men may have different needs when performing certain tasks. For instance, the body structure of most women is different than that of most men, which means that certain pieces of workplace equipment need to be designed accordingly. Preventing and responding to safety hazards and sexual harassment in the workplace is key to create a safe working environment, free from discrimination.

Why this is important

Despite global recognition of the scale and impact of the problem, sexual harassment at work remains a persistent and pervasive problem that disproportionately affects women in all jobs, occupations and sectors of the economy in all countries across the world.

Sexual harassment can have serious consequences for the victim, for their colleagues, for the organisation and for society as a whole. It affects a person's psychological, physical and sexual health, their dignity, their family and social life, and can result in emotional distress such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, sleeplessness, anxiety and physical damage. Colleagues who see and witness sexual harassment are also affected by it, creating an environment of fear and intimidation resulting in lower productivity and increased absenteeism.

When sexual harassment cases don't get resolved in an effective and timely manner, victims can feel forced to resign from their jobs, which can put their professional future and even their livelihood at risk. In general, this is one of the largest barriers to the professional advancement of women, with those who refuse sexual engagement often finding that their opportunities for learning, advancement and mentorship are hampered. Moreover, sexual harassment can diminish the quality of the victim's performance and hinder progress on gender equality.

But sexual harassment in the world of work also comes at a high cost to businesses and their bottom line, including lower profitability, harm to workplace relations and workers' engagement, and damage to their reputation.

Who is affected most?

Sexual harassment can be more prevalent in certain sectors, occupations and work arrangements, especially where individuals are exposed to particular risks that increase the

likelihood of violence and harassment. These include:

- Working in contact with the public
- Working in environments where alcohol is served
- Working non-standard hours
- Working with people in distress
- Working in intimate spaces and private homes
- Working alone in relative isolation or in remote locations

What progress looks like

- There exist prevention measures mitigating the risk that gender, cultural or social norms tacitly condone, support or perpetuate inappropriate behaviour.
- There is a trustworthy, confidential and independent system that delivers swift, complete and fair investigations leading to just resolutions and appropriate remedies.
- Everyone in the workplace feels confident that action will be taken and that survivors, complainants, witnesses and whistle-blowers will be protected from retaliation and career damage.

What challenges you may have observed

You may suspect or witness instances of verbal, nonverbal, psychological or physical harassment, including written and electronic communications, cyberbullying and cyberstalking. This can take many forms which include both quid pro quo cases as well as the creation of an offensive or intimidating environment.

You may also remark that sexually harassing behaviour gets further exacerbated when gender intersects with other dimensions of inequality such as race and ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation and migration status, among others.

Sexual harassment can happen outside the workplace and/or regular working hours, including during travel or social functions related to work, as well as through work-related communication. It can be perpetrated by anyone -supervisors, colleagues, subordinates, clients, customers, service providers or members of the public.

Despite the frequency with which it occurs and its costly consequences, you may find that sexual harassment remains under-reported. Reasons include lack of awareness about what constitutes sexual harassment, a fear of retaliation, lack of effective handling or reporting mechanisms, and stereotypes that lead to victim blaming instead of sanctions for the perpetrator.

What exactly constitutes sexual harassment?

Types of sexual harassment

Quid pro quo: Any physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature affecting the dignity of women and men, which is unwelcome, unreasonable, and offensive to the recipient. In quid pro quo cases, a person's rejection of, or submission to, such conduct is used explicitly or implicitly as a basis for one or more decisions that affect that person's job.

Hostile work environment: Conduct that creates an intimidating, hostile or humiliating working environment for the recipient.

Forms of sexual harassment

Sexual harassment can take different forms that include, but are not limited to:

- Attempted or actual sexual assault, including rape.
- Sharing or displaying sexually inappropriate images or videos in any format.
- Sending sexually suggestive communications in any format.
- Sharing sexual or lewd anecdotes or jokes.
- Making inappropriate sexual gestures, such as pelvic thrusts.
- Unwelcome touching, including pinching, patting, rubbing, or purposefully brushing up against another person.
- Staring in a sexually suggestive manner.
- Repeatedly asking a person for dates or asking for sex.
- Rating a person's sexuality.
- Making sexual comments about appearance, clothing or body parts.
- Name-calling or using slurs with a gender/sexual connotation.
- Making derogatory or demeaning comments about someone's sexual orientation or gender expression.

What metrics to track

- Number of sexual harassment complaints
- Number of sexual harassment cases that get resolved without further victimising survivors
- Employees' views on the organisation's capacity to prevent and handle sexual harassment cases

What steps to take

The adoption of an inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach is crucial to eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work. Effectively tackling this issue requires companies to develop and enforce comprehensive policies, procedures and training addressing all forms of gender-based violence and harassment.

Defining sexual harassment as unwelcome sexual conduct in the workplace and complementing this definition with examples of unacceptable behaviours is a crucial first step in establishing that it will not be tolerated. The same goes for acknowledging that it is a human rights violation and gender-based discrimination, regardless of sex, and may intersect with other dimensions of inequality, such as race, ethnicity, age, disability, nationality, religion, sexual orientation and other social vulnerabilities such as poverty.

Creating a zero-tolerance policy helps make clear to internal and external stakeholders that sexual harassment will not be accepted. Such a policy should specify the rights and responsibilities of the employees and the employer, including the right of any employee to remove themselves from a violent or harassing situation without fear of retaliation. The workplace anti-harassment policy should be reflected in broader policies such as equality policies, collective agreements or codes of conduct.

Focusing on preventing sexual harassment rather than just responding to it means that all staff members must actively participate in eliminating this issue with clear lines of accountability and transparency put in place. This involves cultivating a safe, respectful and equitable corporate culture by fostering collaboration, teamwork and respect, and promoting gender equality and diversity.

Assessing all hazards and risk factors associated with violence and harassment, through workplace health and safety management processes, will help ensure that policies, procedures and training address the real challenges that an organisation faces. Workplace risk assessments should consider factors that increase the likelihood of violence and harassment, including psycho-social hazards and risks.

Particular attention should be paid to hazards and risks that arise from:

- Working conditions and arrangements
- Human resource management
- Third parties such as clients, customers, service providers, users, patients and members of the public
- Discrimination
- Abuse of power relations
- Gender
- Cultural and social norms that support violence and harassment

Such factors may include a male-dominated environment, unequal power dynamics and decentralised or isolated workspaces. The board should also include sexual harassment in all their regular risk assessments.

Gender imbalances in an organisation or industry have been shown to increase the risk of sexual harassment. A male-dominated and highly hierarchical workplace culture poses risks, as do female-dominated occupations with gender stereotypical roles of care and service, in which women are seen as subservient. Taking steps to increase gender diversity at all levels and addressing unequal power balances would help to reduce this vulnerability.

Any effort or initiative to prevent and tackle sexual harassment must be given **adequate time and resources to be effective.**

Identify high-profile male executives who can become allies, speak publicly against sexual harassment and encourage companies to support victims and hold perpetrators accountable.

Actively disseminating information to all employees and ensuring that everyone understands the policies and procedures in place goes a long way towards establishing that there will be no risk or fear of retribution if people intervene as a bystander. Management should, of course, prevent retaliation for reporting.

Establishing grievance mechanisms for staff and management helps make clear that victims will be supported and perpetrators will be held accountable. It is important that reporting procedures for incidents of sexual harassment are aligned with international labour standards that comply with or go beyond local employment laws and policies. They must be gender-responsive and make it safe and easy for victims and bystanders to report sexual harassment without fear of retaliation. Information on complaint and investigation procedures must be easily accessible to all, including people with disabilities.

These should describe how workers can make complaints through both formal and informal channels (informal complaints processes, such as ombudspersons, are crucial as not all victims are ready to pursue a formal complaint). All complaints must be promptly, thoroughly and respectfully investigated and/or resolved, without re-victimizing survivors of abuse.

Ombudsperson systems should be informal, neutral and confidential, with only the ombud officer aware of the issue. This can empower victims, giving them the information and space, they need to think through their options and decide what action to take. Ombudspersons hold no formal hearings and are not guided by rules of evidence. At the same time, they do not prevent more formal action being taken subsequently.

Any investigation process should be prompt and thorough with clearly defined time limits. It should also be equitable: for example, if perpetrators are allowed a lawyer, union representative or advocate, survivors and witnesses should also be allowed one. It is equally important to describe what interim measures may be taken, e.g. relocating the alleged perpetrator's workspace or putting them on administrative leave.

Victims should be treated with the utmost respect and be reassured that the responsibility for addressing sexual harassment does not belong with them. They also **need to be supported** throughout any grievance or investigation process and provided with relevant information, e.g. peer support groups and referrals to related services. A victim-centered approach to investigation should secure the victim's informed consent before taking any formal measures. However, under certain circumstances, an employer's responsibility of care to their employees may require by law action to be taken without the consent of the victim. Protection, support and remedial measures must also be available for the victim, e.g. line-manager support, as well as remedies and compensation for material and non-material damages where appropriate.

Sanctions should be clearly set out by any policy and be proportional to the behaviour in question and consistent with previous cases. Depending on the context and the relevant national law, these can include: verbal or written warnings, a direct apology, dismissal, mediation, coaching, counselling or ongoing supervision. It is critical to make sure that perpetrators are not simply re-assigned, particularly when such reassignment involves a promotion of any kind.

Regularly assessing sexual harassment reports without breaching confidentiality around personal information and data will help leadership teams maintain a clear idea of all related challenges and progress made. That requires collecting data on all reports of sexual harassment and disaggregating those by sex, age, disability, nationality and other relevant categories for both survivors and perpetrators. Data collection must be built into the normal

functioning of the process and transparently made public at regular intervals without disclosing any personal details. Equally important is to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of any policies and procedures relating to sexual harassment.

Conducting anonymous staff surveys that include questions about the safety of their workplace environment, can provide management with meaningful data on employee views and experiences. This can also help with assessing whether behaviour by high-value employees that is inconsistent with the company's stated values and code of conduct is nevertheless tolerated and/or encouraged.

Training, guidance and awareness-raising for managers, supervisors, employees (male and female) and their representatives must be in place to ensure everyone understands the nature and risks of sexual harassment as well as how to tackle it. Frequent, in-person, interactive training seems to be the best approach, particularly when it features content that is tailored to a specific department, company or cohort of employees. Various approaches may be required to transform the workplace culture, including implicit bias training, training to change stereotypes and social norms, and peer-to-peer training, which empowers employees to help each other disseminate information and change harmful practices. Training should be evaluated to assess its short- and long-term effectiveness and ensure that the best methods are implemented.

The most effective initiatives include training for managers on **recognizing early signs of harassment and intervening swiftly, as well as bystander intervention programs** which teach bystanders to step in when someone is behaving inappropriately. Bystander training, encouragement and support can empower individuals to stand up against harassers even when they are not the victims themselves. Bystanders can take steps to protect or remove the target from the harassing situation, address the harasser or help to defuse a situation. They can also provide support to victims, report perpetrators via third-party complaint mechanisms or, if necessary, keep a record of what they observed to help victims once they are ready to report. However, in cases where the perpetrator is in a position of power, a bystander may need to weigh the risks involved. It is therefore important to establish third-party complaint mechanisms not just for victims but also for individuals who may not be a direct recipient of the sexual harassment but feel that the behaviour has created an intimidating or offensive environment.

Comprehensive policies on sexual harassment, should also include measures to **address domestic violence**: awareness-raising, leave for victims, flexible work arrangements, temporary protection against dismissal for survivors and referral to public mitigation measures. Organisations can also refer to the nature and effects of domestic violence when disseminating information to raise awareness on violence in the workplace.

Even small and medium organisations have the potential to **influence societal norms** and behaviours on gender-based violence and harassment through advertising and campaigning, particularly when these issues align with core business aims -as is the case for companies and organisations supporting female entrepreneurship.

Harassment isn't the only hazard

Apart from sexual harassment prevention, this principle also involves:

- Considering differential impacts of workplace practices on women and men
- Providing safe working conditions and protection from exposure to hazardous materials
- Disclosing potential risks, including to reproductive health
- Striving to offer health insurance or other needed services and ensure equal access for all employees
- Respecting women and men employees' rights to time off for medical care and for counselling for themselves and their dependents
- Identifying and addressing security issues, including the safety of women when travelling to and from work on company-related business
- Undertaking an assessment of whether the organisation's current infrastructure is gender-sensitive: segregated toilets, changing rooms, nursing facilities available to staff, kids' rooms etc.

Who needs to be involved

Creating the right culture and ensuring the health and safety of all employees must begin with and involve the highest level of management, including the board of directors. Senior executives should play a key role in setting the agenda at the top and providing leadership in tackling violence and sexual harassment, empowering workers to raise concerns and treating everyone fairly.

All sexual harassment, health and safety policies and procedures must be developed in consultation with workers' representatives, considering the views of a diverse set of employees (including women) and managers.

Key area 5 | Education and Training

This principle includes everything related to the rights and opportunities that employees have to access quality education and training, in the context of their employment. Effective training programs that support women's professional development are also complemented by networking and mentoring initiatives.

Why this is important

On-the-job training, networking, and career development are interconnected. Therefore, equal opportunities for women and men to benefit from capacity building is of critical importance in every industry and in entrepreneurship.

This is especially true for skills that involve new technological tools and ways of working. Rapid technological changes have already significantly impacted the world of work, with severe implications for the future of gender equality. Horizontal occupational segregation means that women and men are likely to be affected differently by automation. Technology adoption could displace millions of women from their clerical and administrative or caretaking jobs and many others will need to change the way they work. If they are supported to successfully complete these transitions, women could find more productive, well paid and fulfilling employment, but if they don't, they may face a growing wage gap or leave the labour market altogether. Lifelong learning policies and practices that encourage women, inside and outside of organisations, to expand their skills into digital fields can help prepare them to meet the challenges associated with the changing world of work.

On a different note, training for all employees about how their organisation is advancing gender equality can help align everyone around shared values, build skills that promote inclusion and ensure compliance with company policies.

What progress looks like

- Workplace policies and programs open avenues for the advancement of women at all levels and across all business areas, and encourage women to enter non-traditional job fields
- Women and men have equal access to company-supported education and training
- Women and men enjoy equal opportunities for networking and mentoring
- Employees and executives exhibit high-levels of awareness and capacity around gender issues, gender mainstreaming and the way their organisation supports both

What challenges you may have observed

There may be observable differences in the amount of training and mentoring that men and women get while working in the organisation -or these KPIs have never been set or tracked before. These discrepancies may be due to the fact that the roles that women usually take on within the organisation are not considered as worthy of development opportunities as men's jobs are or that those opportunities are not accessible to women in the same way they are to men.

Even outside of the organisation, you may be observing shortages in female talent in critical fields of your sector. The education that young women get from school or universities may not tie well with the skills that the industry requires or you may find that women's interest in your organisation's line of work remains low.

Moreover, you may have observed that there are very few employees and executives at any level of the organisation who possess a good working knowledge around gender issues and who can transmit this knowledge and understanding across their teams and departments.

What metrics to track

- Hours of role-based training (gender disaggregated)
- Hours of mentoring (gender disaggregated)
- Hours of gender-related training (gender disaggregated)

What steps to take

Organisations can set targets for the inclusion of female colleagues' training and talent development.

Collecting gender-disaggregated data on training attendees and revisiting those data regularly is a critical part of the process. When women and men do not benefit equally from training opportunities, organisations can take steps such as: assessing the barriers to women's participation, giving priority to women trainees in cases of equal merit, making sure that training opportunities (topics, venues, times, etc.) are accessible for employees with family responsibilities, and creating training, mentorship or career advancement opportunities specifically addressing women.

If a number of the women and men you are hoping to reach with a training program have family responsibilities, your organisation should consider measures and structures that could support those individuals to focus on their professional development while caring for their families.

Childcare spaces and/or care subsidiaries are very good tools to achieve this goal.

Organisations in male-dominated fields can promote women's inclusion in the sector and boost the availability of skilled female talent by partnering with universities, CSOs and schools to **encourage women's and girl's interest and capacity** in male-dominated professions.

Training does not necessarily mean lectures, seminars and long-term certifications. An organisation's training initiatives might involve internships and career advice, awareness-raising events and job fairs for women, grant programs and fellowships, financial and in-kind support for other training programs, summer camps etc.

Company-wide staff satisfaction surveys can be very helpful in identifying needs and gaps in their learning opportunities and experiences, especially when there have been discrepancies identified in the training realities of men and women.

Organisations should strive to design or use gender-responsive educational curricula that counteract gendered occupational segregation. This is key to promoting the presence of women in such fields.

Organisations should offer their staff opportunities to improve their understanding of gender equality and women's empowerment issues and of how these affect their work. Gender-related training for staff and executives should be well designed by experts, offered on a periodic and sustainable basis, accompanied by clear action components, interactive in practice and delivered in person (not exclusively online) at least some of the time.

Gender-related training topics for employees and team leaders

To build company-wide capacity around gender issues and gender mainstreaming, staff and team leaders should receive quality periodical training on topics such as:

- Implicit gender bias
- Gender-responsive communication
- Sexual harassment prevention
- Direct and indirect discrimination at work
- Designing and implementing gender action plans
- Gender mainstreaming across departments and functions
- Data collection and gender analysis
- Gender inclusive leadership
- Gender responsive HR practices
- Gender wage gap

Who needs to be involved

HR and L&D departments and teams are the first that come to mind when we talk about learning and education in the context of an organisation. However, the design and delivery of training programs should actively involve employees and managers from across the organisation in order to ensure the effective coverage of people's needs but also the ownership that is necessary for individuals to benefit from learning opportunities on a long-term basis.

External consultants, training providers and CSOs can help considerably with expertise and training professionals, but ultimately all training programs should be co-designed and adapted to each organisation's and team's needs.

Key area 6 | Enterprise Development, Supply Chain and Marketing Practices

Human rights violations can occur not only in poor and developing countries but also in developed and rich economies. Respecting human rights is the responsibility of all actors, private as well as public, and making sure that human rights are not violated through the company's operations is a first essential step to take. By creating business links with women-owned businesses and influencing suppliers to respect human rights and promote gender equality, companies and organisations can make a positive impact in the lives of women and communities.

Respecting the dignity of women in marketing materials is also central to this principle.

Why this is important

A company's supply chain can hold various risks in terms of infringements of the rights of women and girls, such as the use of company services or facilities for human trafficking or sexual exploitation, or violations of labour rights within supplier companies. However, the supply chain can also be a powerful source for creating economic opportunities for women-owned businesses, or to influence suppliers to establish gender equality policies and promote diversity in the workplace.

Pursuing gender-responsive procurement within a company has many valuable benefits. Fostering supplier diversity and inclusion promotes innovation through new products, services and solutions. It spurs competition on both price and service levels between a company's existing and potential vendors and enhances market penetration and access to new markets. Supplier diversity may also become a source of a company's competitive advantage: locking oneself with the same suppliers can be a risky endeavour.

Companies with diverse and inclusive supply chain policies and practices boost their brand image and reputation. Institutional investors are also increasingly exercising their voting rights against corporations that do not uphold the highest ESG standards associated with "stakeholder value", such as gender parity on boards.

Marketing materials are used by companies to promote their products or services, but they also communicate the values and image of the company to customers, clients and the wider public. Commercials, advertisements and other marketing materials have the potential to influence not only the image of the company in the eyes of the public but also the views on the roles of women and men in society.

What progress looks like

- The organisation's supply chain involves relationships with women-owned enterprises, including small businesses.
- The organisation's customers/beneficiaries include women-owned enterprises.
- All business partners, beneficiaries and suppliers respect the organisation's commitment to advancing equality and inclusion

What challenges you may have observed

You may have difficulty in promoting this principle to your organisation's leadership's agenda and be met with resistance relating to long-term, established relationships and norms.

You or your organisation's marketing and communication experts may lack the necessary capacity to understand language and communication-related gender issues or the tools to act against non-inclusive advertising initiatives.

Your products and services or aspects of those may not have been designed or marketed in a gender-responsive manner and you may be met with resistance from enterprise development teams around the necessity of striving for such an inclusive approach.

What metrics to track

- Number and ratio of suppliers and customers/beneficiaries who have been screened using gender equality criteria (e.g using WEPs as a roadmap)
- Number and ratio of women-owned enterprises in your supply chain and customer base
- Number of contracts, on average, that you have annually with each supplier/beneficiary (disaggregated by the gender of the owner of the company, and by WEPs signatory status)
- Total/average value of contracts (disaggregated by the gender of the owner of the company, and by WEPs signatory status) in absolute currency and/or as a percentage of total annual procurement spend
- Gender ratio at management level in your suppliers and customers/beneficiaries
- Gender ratio at employee level in these companies

What steps to take

Secure commitment from top-level management to make gender-responsive procurement a central element of the organisation's culture and business practices.

This process could involve:

1. An analysis to establish the baseline number of suppliers (supply chain) and beneficiaries (enterprise development) that are women-owned businesses or that have gender equality policies in place. Based on the findings of the baseline study, companies will be able to assess whether there is an imbalance in the opportunities they offer to gender-responsive companies and women-owned businesses.
2. A risk assessment to identify any actual or potential social and environmental risks related to gender discrimination. To better understand these risks, it is helpful to look at certain factors that could affect a supply chain and/or customer base.

Some aspects of risk

- Geographic scope: Researching gender-based discrimination and cultural norms can help identify and understand country-specific challenges for women.
- Exceptional crisis: Understanding issues related to migration may help inform sourcing practices. Women migrants are particularly exposed to gender-based discrimination and vulnerability.
- Production model: Home-based work represents a great opportunity for women and men to reconcile family responsibilities with earning an income. However, it can also be used to perpetrate gender-based discrimination through lower pay and longer hours.
- Sector-specific factors: Certain sectors, or production lines, such as the garment and textile industry, have traditionally relied heavily on a women-based workforce. However, their managers and other company leaders remain men.

3. A gender-sensitive code of conduct and a robust due diligence system, for both the organisation and its business partners.
4. A robust data collection and storage system with detailed supplier and customer/beneficiaries' characteristics. Systematising data collection can help better understand roadblocks and challenges faced by women both in their relationships with the organisation and outside of it.
5. An implementation strategy with a clear roadmap outlining the measures needed to meet the objectives, targets, roles and responsibilities, plus who is accountable for the results.
6. Allocation of required resources to meet the targets.
7. An effective communication strategy to raise awareness of relevant stakeholders about the policy and their rights and responsibilities.
8. A solid monitoring and evaluation framework.

It is important to ensure that company products, services and facilities **are not used for human trafficking** and/or labour or sexual exploitation.

Proactively recruit women for procurement roles and appoint them to managerial and executive positions. Also provide training to strengthen the female talent pool and women's leadership in this area.

Engage suppliers and customers/beneficiaries in the process of making managers at all levels accountable for success in the area of gender equality, through performance plans and assessments.

Establish effective grievance mechanisms to ensure relevant stakeholders and suppliers can voice their concerns. Aim for gender parity in the composition of a grievance management team.

Facilitate access to business opportunities for gender-sensitive suppliers by:

1. Widely sharing information about opportunities to supply goods and services.
2. Publishing procurement policies, procedures and points of contact on the corporate website.
3. Standardising and consolidating the application process.
4. Publishing gender-responsive procurement results in the corporate annual report and/or corporate sustainability report.
5. Build their capacity to engage in your supply chain, such as in your bid process, procedures, payment terms, and how to complete required agreements. When a business does not win a bid, provide feedback so they can learn from the experience and address their shortcomings in future bid opportunities.
6. Partnering with local women's organisations and certifying bodies to help identify barriers and solutions.
7. Removing capital requirements and limiting contract sizes, for example, by breaking down requirements (offering one large contract can exclude many small women-owned businesses which lack the required scope or depth to compete).
8. Exploring gender-sensitive solutions to credit and lending barriers.
9. Valuing the preferred firms over non-preferred firms. For instance, for equally compliant bids contracts are awarded to the preferred firm, e.g. women-owned businesses and/or gender-responsive companies.
10. Awarding a certain share of contracts to "preferred firms" – gender-responsive companies and women-owned businesses – and communicating openly about it. Reviewing this list on a regular basis to ensure a level-playing field for new and smaller, yet capable, women-owned businesses.

11. Consulting preferred firms on their experiences, current barriers or challenges that they face in accessing or fully participating in your supply chain; and seek their recommendations of how to resolve these issues.
12. Introducing subcontracting requirements. For example, vendors awarded contracts over a certain threshold would be required to submit plans for purchasing from women-owned businesses, thereby helping to achieve targets.
13. Developing a roster of gender-responsive companies and women-owned businesses and inviting them to bid. Asking out-of-the box questions on where women-owned businesses can be found.
14. Organising supplier gatherings to enable networking and foster an inclusive community of gender-responsive supply chains.

The above steps can easily be adapted to facilitate access to programs and services for gender-sensitive customers and beneficiaries.

Organisations that are committed to implementing the principle can also start by **analysing their existing marketing materials** from a gender equality perspective. In addition, they need to ask business partners and customers to respect the dignity of women in all marketing and other company materials.

Useful questions for a gender analysis of marketing materials

- How are women and/or men portrayed in the material?
- What words come to mind when you look at the pictures or watch a video?
- What image of women and/or men does the material create or reproduce?
- Does this material reproduce or question gender stereotypes, and if so, which?
- What effect can material of this kind have for: (1) the organisation; (2) its customers/beneficiaries; or (3) society as a whole?
- Could this material have been produced in a different way? If so, how?

Organisations should train marketing and communication executives on gender equality issues and how these can affect their work.

Who needs to be involved

Key to a successful policy is backing from **the company's executive leadership and departments**, particularly from the human resources, operations (production, procurement and sourcing), legal and communication departments or teams.

Equally important is getting backing from a company's board members, business partners and other key stakeholders.

With regards to marketing practices, internal and external communications teams should be the first point of contact (and training) to support this kind of goals and initiatives.

Key area 7 | Community Leadership and Engagement

Organisations are increasingly investing in community development programs to make valuable, effective and responsible contributions to gender equality and women's empowerment. Community engagement initiatives may differ from company to company, depending on the business area, strategy and field of expertise. Community engagement projects do not need to be philanthropic activities, but they should be a cause that the company and/or its employees feel strongly about and have the knowledge and capacity to engage in, ideally on a long-term basis.

Why this is important

By engaging in gender equality initiatives within the wider community, organisations can respond to consumer preferences to buy from companies with gender-responsive business practices and who are actively supporting community initiatives.

Moreover, community engagement on issues such as gender equality have been shown to increase the sense of purpose and commitment of employees of any organisation, who see themselves contributing in a meaningful way to the sustainability of their societies as a whole.

What progress looks like

- The organisation is recognised as active and effective in promoting gender equality within the wider community where it operates.
- All stakeholders in and around the organisation feel connected to the initiatives it undertakes to support women and girls and contribute to gender equality and inclusion.

What challenges you may have observed

Gender equality initiatives are not considered relevant to the business goals of the organisation or company.

Community engagement priorities change often depending on outside stimuli and gender equality initiatives remain short, scarce and inconsequential, aiming mainly at public relations results.

The organisation attempts to design and implement gender equality initiatives without external input or partners, thus resulting in short-sighted and short-lived programs and/or services.

What metrics to track

- Number of women and girls positively impacted through community engagement initiatives
- Number of community stakeholders who benefitted from wider coalitions and initiatives
- Number of positive policy or practice changes that community advocacy has managed to bring about

What steps to take

Lead by example – showcase company commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Establish formal and informal partnerships with women's groups, women business associations and NGOs focusing on the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment in the company's field of work

Leverage influence, alone or in partnership, to advocate for gender equality and collaborate with business partners, suppliers and community leaders to promote gender diversity and inclusion.

Work with community stakeholders, officials and others to eliminate discrimination and increase opportunities for women and girls.

Promote and recognize women's leadership in, and contributions to, their communities and ensure sufficient representation of women in any community consultation.

Use philanthropy and grants programs to support your organisation's commitment to inclusion, equality and human rights. Initiatives can range from giving grants to women entrepreneurs or cooperatives, developing the skills of local suppliers to include them in the company's supply chain, establishing scholarship programs for women to study in male-dominated fields, offering skills development, internships or employment opportunities to marginalized groups of women and girls etc.

A checklist of testing questions for sustainable community initiatives

- What is the underlying problem or challenge that the initiative will aim to tackle?
- What is the expected outcome of the initiative?
- Who will be the main stakeholders to involve, and what are their roles?
- What are the existing needs of the different stakeholders as they go into the project or initiative?
- What are the existing assets of the different stakeholders as they go into the project or initiative?
- What are the benefits of the initiative for the community as a whole?
- What are the benefits of the initiative for the company?
- What are the potential challenges to realising the initiative?
- What will be needed to realise the initiative?
- How can it be ensured that the initiative will be sustainable?
- What would be the first step to take to implement the idea?

Who needs to be involved

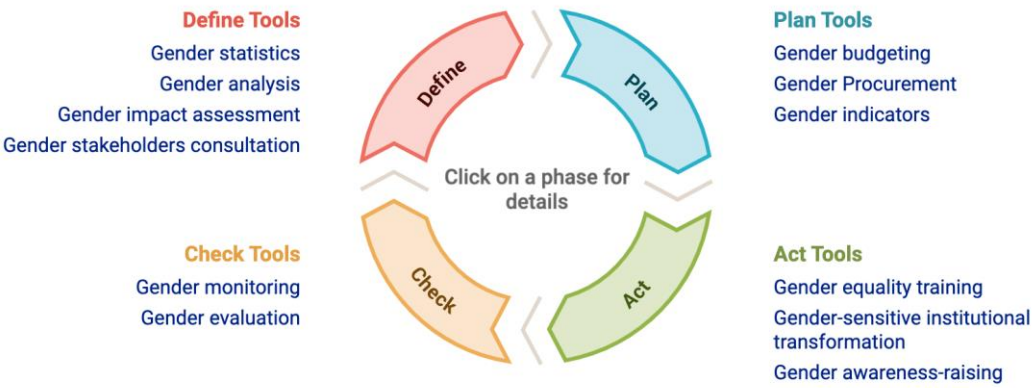
Internal and external stakeholders (employees, leaders, CSOs, educational institutes and local communities and local authorities) need to come together to design and implement the most effective and sustainable programs and initiatives.

HOW IT ALL COMES TOGETHER

Integrating the gender perspective in a policy, practice or organisation means that equality between women and men should be taken into consideration in all decisions, in each phase of the decision-making process, by all the actors involved.

This process is understood as a multi-stage cycle, including defining, planning, implementing and checking (monitoring and evaluating). In many cases, these stages are turned into a cycle, with each step being repeated as changes occur. For example, when a policy is evaluated, it may reveal new problems that need to be addressed for re-programming.

The gender mainstreaming cycle presented here by the European Institute for Gender Equality can be adjusted to different organisational processes such as the development of a gender strategy or action plan. The [chart](#) below refers to the specific stages of the cycle and the necessary elements that need to be given attention within each stage. Specific methods and tools that should be used within each of the cycle stages are also included. Some methods and tools, such as consulting with stakeholders or providing gender equality training to the actors involved, can be useful in more than one stage.



<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/what-is-gender-mainstreaming>

CHANGE CHALLENGES

Change does not happen easily or overnight, and it often requires preparation, advocacy and systematic follow-up. Using data, evidence, good practices from other organisations or ecosystems and the involvement of internal and external stakeholders can help to push the work forward and to generate genuine commitment and ownership.

Various challenges and obstacles exist in experimenting and in determining what measures work in achieving positive results for gender equality. There is no one size fits all approach. The best of those initiatives are gradually changing corporate cultures and mindsets about gender roles.

- a. For a lot of companies and organisations actively prioritising acting against gender inequalities takes time and persistent effort from internal and external stakeholders. This is especially true when crises and challenges that always seem more important or urgent take up the time and space needed to address all gender-related issues and start resolving them.
- b. Smaller companies may lack critical resources to implement large scale initiatives and change, while larger businesses often need a whole new internal communication strategy to make workplaces more women- and family-friendly.
- c. Many companies report that even though a lot is being done on gender diversity, there are still few women on boards or in top management teams and that often it is women who do not step up to these higher-level positions.
- d. Applying measures such as flexible working arrangements throughout a company while still meeting operational and client demands is a challenge.
- e. In some countries, the concentration of women in certain sectors makes it difficult to recruit qualified male candidates for jobs and vice-versa. This may occur when the labour market is divided along gender lines.

However, these and all the other challenges we are bound to encounter in our quest for stronger gender equality in entrepreneurship should not stop us. They may require us to think smarter, act more collectively or just rest before continuing to fight for a more inclusive future.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES AND APPENDIXES

- [The WEPs website](#)
- [Equality means business: Training Manual for Gender Equality and Women's](#)
- [Empowerment in the Private Sector, UN Women Georgia Country Office](#)
- [Gender-Responsive Procurement Guidance Note, UN Women](#)
- [Building Inclusive Boards to Achieve Gender Equality, UN Women](#)
- [Attracting and Retaining Talent through Inclusive Family-Friendly Policies, UN Women](#)
- [Tackling Sexual Harassment in the World of Work, UN Women](#)
- [Empowering Women at Work Company Policies and Practices for Gender Equality, ILO](#)
- [Gender Diversity Journey: Company Good Practices, ILO](#)
- [Gender Impact Assessment, EIGE](#)
- [The EU approach to gender mainstreaming, EIGE](#)
- [Promoting women's economic independence and entrepreneurship: Good Practices, EIGE](#)
- [Global best practices in banking for women-led SMEs, EBRD](#)
- [A comparative analysis of promoting pay equity: models and impacts, ILO](#)

Appendix A | Gender Action Plan

GENDER ACTION PLAN

This is the draft **Gender Action Plan (GAP)** developed as part of the FOWSE project co-funded by Erasmus +.

The GAP is structured as follows:

- **Objective area:** Outlines overall project objectives, in line with the information presented in the gender baseline assessment report
- **Activities:** Suggests activities to be undertaken in order to reach project objectives
- **Indicators:** Introduces key performance indicators to measure progress made over time towards reaching the **targets** set vis-à-vis **baseline** data (and against which we will undertake the Mid-Term Review and Final Evaluation)
- **Timeline:** Indicates by when this activity should be implemented and completed
- **Responsibility:** Appoints the staff/department bearing the primary responsibility to ensure that the activity is successfully implemented
- **Resources:** Indicates available resources that will allow the team to undertake specific activities ranging from staff time, budget/costs, in-kind contributions, volunteers etc. It can be divided into 'internal' resources (staff will most likely implement the activity), or 'external' resources (procurement or other funds will most likely be needed)
- **Support by WoT team:** Indicates areas where the WoT team can provide technical advice/support with practical guidance, trainings, inputs etc.
- **Status:** Indicate space to fill in comments on status as regards both activities and fulfilment of KPIs (not yet started/in progress/completed)

The Gender Action Plan is a living document and will be regularly updated based on progress made, new facts and recent developments in the field.

Objective (Key Area)	Activity	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Timeline	Responsibility	Resources/Budget	Status
1. Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality	i.e.: Increase women's representation in Board of Directors	i.e. Number (and percentage) of women Board members	i.e. 2 out of 7	i.e. 3 out of 7	i.e. By September 2023	i.e. CEO & COO	N/A	
2. Promote equal opportunities and non-discrimination in the workplace	i.e. Establish an equal employment opportunities policy	i.e. Promotion rates of women and men			i.e. By April 2023	i.e. HR	N/A	OBJ
3. Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers	i.e. Implement a needs assessment of male and female colleagues on what is necessary for a better work/life balance	i.e. Number of answers collected on the needs assessment			i.e. By October 2022	i.e. Gender focal point	N/A	OBJ
4. Promote education, training and professional development for women	i.e. Assess all hazards and risk factors associated with violence and harassment through workplace health and safety management processes.	i.e. Number of diagnosis made on violence and harassment in the workplace			i.e. By December 2022	i.e. CEO and HR	N/A	
5. Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women	i.e. Set targets for the inclusion of female colleagues training and talent development	i.e. Number of female colleagues trained		OBJ	i.e. By December 2023	i.e. HR	i.e. 10.000€	OBJ
6. Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy	i.e. Set up a criteria grid to select suppliers, customers and/or beneficiaries	i.e. Number and ratio of suppliers and customers/beneficiaries who have been screened using gender equality criteria			i.e. By December 2023	i.e. Trainers	N/A	
7. Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality	i.e. Promote and recognize women's leadership	i.e. Number of women and girls positively impacted through community engagement initiatives			i.e. By December 2023	i.e. Trainers	N/A	